THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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This is a meditation within the philosophy of mind on an intellectual object of universal significance, that is, an understanding of Christian divinity. My interpretive perspective is not formed by Western classical speculation or religious dogma. Rather, it arises from a general interpretation of the experience of life. I consider it a meditation in philosophical theology. It is an analysis with a conclusion. It is primarily an exercise in the Theology of Anthropology, in contrast to a Theology of Divinity. Since the Christian notion of the Incarnation of God has divinized humanity, and reciprocally, humanity has humanized the divinity, I follow Feuerbach's decision in his approach to Christian interpretation. "I change the object as it is in the imagination into the object as it is in reality."[1] From an act of imagination to an existential realization is, in fact, an act of human self-consciousness of the philosophy of mind in which no particular philosophical system of any school of thought must be followed, but rather a philosophy suited to the nature of humanity is required in the contemporary cultural context.

A philosophy suited to classical Western humanity is not suitable for modern existential human understanding. This is especially so with respect of interpreting the divinity. The human being who awakens to an existential self-consciousness is immediately aware of the qualitative difference in thought from the brute that it transcends at least within a philosophical context. It is this qualitative difference that identifies the human intellect, not as a fixed concept, but as a dynamic concept. It is through the practice of a religion that this qualitative difference between the human and the brute is most evident. Humanity is a religious animal who asks the question: is there a God or not? God outside of humanity as an object of knowledge is the object of the senses. God as a religious awareness of consciousness is present to human nature. Thus, a religious self-consciousness is the earliest form of human self-knowledge. The brute, as a living orgasm, is not religiously self-conscious in any human sense. The computer, a non-living artifact, is not humanly self-conscious. In contemporary philosophical understanding religion and human dignity are qualities possessed only by *homo sapiens*.

[1] Feuerbach, Ludwig (1957) [1841]. *The Essence of Christianity,* Harper Torchbooks, p. xxxix.

The phenomenon of human culture discloses the practical development of the human subject in light of its conception of the divinity appropriate to its own self-conscious understanding. As Feuerbach has noted, "Temples in honour of religion are in truth temples in honour of architecture."[2] One might argue from this perspective that material grandeur has taken the place of the glory due to of God. The physical has triumphed over the metaphysical in the history of revealed religion. That may be acknowledged on a sociological level, but what about on the level of the philosophy of the mind? Have contemporary material reductionists been successful in mapping out the regions of the mind? Anatomical regions of the brain may be successfully mapped out but I doubt that similar regions of the mind, or the human intellect, may be conclusively mapped out. The mind remains mysterious as well as metaphysical. As a metaphysical phenomenon, however, the mind is capable of reflecting on experiences outside itself as well as events generated within itself, the conception of numbers for example.

For the most part, in light of its physical and metaphysical assessments of Revelation in the Judeo-Christian sense the religious mind assigns all causation to God, except that which is repugnant to it. Thus, the Christian God becomes a God for humans from the perspective of desired human values. That which is repugnant is assigned to the external powers of evil.[3] In short, in Christian experience, God becomes the inward mirror of perfected humanity. With the collapse of Christendom, the concept of God as Trinity has lost much of its practical and societal influence. However, other abstract images of the divinity remain in the popular imagination as identified by Feuerbach, i.e., the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.[4] Such abstract phenomena existed in the understanding before they were projected as sensible events subject to belief by the faithful. Such projections are not to be understood as pathologies of the mind. But rather these projections disclose a unique capacity of the mind to create a cosmological environment, which the brute lacks, suitable for human inhabitation. This is perhaps why brute animals cannot conceive of themselves as specific individual entities capable of altering their environment. They are dependent solely on their sense organs as they adjust to their environment. They cannot establish their "individual personality" as humans can through self-

[2] *Essence of Christianity*, p. 20.

[3] With respect to the serpent being identified as the devil, Pauline Viviano's comment concerning the sin of Adam and Eve is significant for contemporary philosophical interpretation of the Book of Genesis. "It should be noted that nowhere in this text is the serpent identified as the devil; this identification does not come about until the first century B. C. E. (Wis 2:24; Enoch 69:6.) *Collegeville Biblical Commentary*, Liturgical Press, MN (1970, p. 43.)

[4] *Essence of Christianity*, p. 73.

reflection. In humans, any idea of God must be generated by the mind before the projection of it in any societal context.

Human culture is the recognition of human collective subjectivity expressed objectively. Objective culture is an aggregate of individual subjectivities often with a transcendent aspect. In modern times the individual has become more significant than the group in human self-understanding. Recorded history begins with the understanding of the group which subsequently allows for identity to the individual. Whereas, modern history recognizes that the individual gives meaning to the group. The contemporary Christian religious mind, however, conceives the individual as the passive term and God as the active term in the God/human relationship. This passivity, originally characteristic of the Hebraic religious mind, may account for the lack of a particular form of scientific or artificial culture in modern Jewish religion. Like philosophy, science and architecture are not revealed aspects of God's reality. According to the Judeo-Christian scriptures God favours no cultural expression, but has chosen his elect from among humanity created in his image and likeness. Human culture accepts God's presence into concrete and changeable reality. The nature of any other living forms of life did not appeal to God hence Judeo-Christian theology must be conceived as anthropology, not mere biology. In Christian anthropology, the difference between Christian believers and Hellenist philosophers is between reason, on one hand, and the heart or feelings, on the other. The latter favours reason and the former favour heart-felt feelings. The former concentrates on the heart, freed from all negativity, and the latter concentrates on reason within a binding logic.

Catholic theologians of anthropology arrive at the opposite understanding of Feuerbach who appears to them to be a negative thinker. Catholic understanding preserves the transcendent aspect of anthropology, while affirming the human aspect of the believer. This positive interpretation is disclosed within a contemporary philosophical and biblical understanding of anthropology. Jörg Splett observes: "In this sense anthropomorphism reflects the theomorphic nature of man. It does not try to explain God in the light of man, as Feuerbach tried to do when transforming theology into anthropology, but rather reduces man to the mystery of God — which thereby appears all the more clearly in its own proper character, since it is not merely apprehended as the negative contrast to man."[5] In light of the technodigital future facing humanity, classical understanding is likely to be

[5] *The Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (Karl Rahner, ed.) Burns & Oates (1986) s.v. Anthropomorphism.

inadequate to determine what is positive or negative within contemporary humanity. From a biblical perspective Werner Post notes: “But along with anthropomorphisms, we find that the supreme transcendence of God is emphasized, and in many cases this is to be taken as a deliberate reaction against anthropomorphisms. This tendency gradually prevailed and the notion of God became more abstract, which, somewhat like the abandonment of mythological assertions, prepared the way for dogmatic propositions in post biblical times.”[6] In light of Vatican II anthropology as theology requires as reassessment of dogmatic propositions.

[6] Ibid.